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ABSTRACT

This monograph offers suggestions to teachers and administrators for involving parents in middle school programs. It outlines the reasons for encouraging such involvement, identifies some of the roles parents may play, and delineates the steps to be taken in establishing a program that taps the time and talents of parents and other adults. Detailed descriptions are included of six ongoing programs from around the country that strengthen the school-home bond: "New Ways to Involve Parents" from Hopkins West Junior High School in Minnetonka, Minnesota; "Project Adolescent" at Amherst Middle School in Amherst, New Hampshire; "Adolescent Behavior Educational Seminar" from Humboldt Junior High School in Dewey, Arizona; "Successful Home/School Interaction" from Hines Middle School in Newport News, Virginia; "ISS (in-school suspension) Program" at Burley Middle School in Charlottesville, Virginia; and "Parents for Excellence in Education" programs at Weisenborn Junior High School in Huber Heights, Ohio. References for additional information are included, along with an appendix that provides 13 tips for parents working with their middle school students at home and a flyer designed to assist schools in attracting parents to various volunteer roles. (TE)

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Involving Parents in Middle Level Education

John W. Myers

EA 017 964

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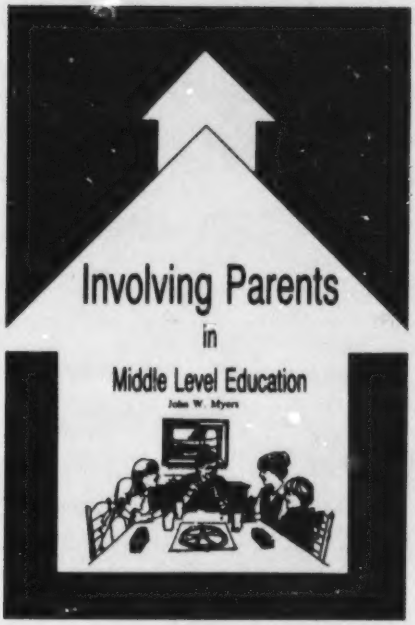
Involving Parents
in
Middle Level Education
John W. Myers

NATIONAL
middle
school
ASSOCIATION

The Publications Committee is pleased to add this monograph to the Association's growing list of publications. The topic is one of both current interest and real importance to virtually all middle school educators.

We are grateful to Dr. John W. Myers for preparing this manuscript. Dr. Myers, the Academic Dean of Father Ryan High School in Nashville, Tennessee, previously served as Assistant Professor of Education at Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville. He is active in the Tennessee Association of Middle Schools and the National Middle School Association as well as other professional associations and activities.

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—My wife, Janet, who puts up with me, and my transescent children, John and Jennifer, who are providing me with real-life adventures with middle schoolers.

John W. Myers

Foreword

Out of the extensive discussions and assessments of public education that have been on-going throughout America in recent years has come a new view on the role of parents in education. In some ways this view represents a harkening back to an earlier time, a time when parents kept close tabs on the school activities and assignments of their children and always made a point to meet the teachers personally.

However, the reasons for involving parents anew in education are not rooted in nostalgia, but rather in necessity. Public awareness of the widely reported inadequacies of education, however valid or invalid, has given rise to a readiness on the part of parents to become involved. Then the many studies which collectively might be said to comprise the effective school research data bank have consistently pointed to parental involvement as a characteristic of such schools. Students simply learn more in schools where parents take an active part. In addition, those societal changes which have greatly affected the family structure have made the need for such involvement all the more critical. At the same time those changes which have made parental involvement more desirable have also made it considerably more difficult. Working mothers, one parent families, population mobility, and increased distances between schools and homes because of consolidation and desegregation are among factors which greatly complicate the development of the desired partnership. So despite the recognized need for and importance of parental involvement it is difficult to achieve.

And if there are special needs for a strong bond between home and school surely they are present at the middle level just as much as at the primary level. The "developmental tasks" involved in the attainment of adolescence are many, and are often traumatic. They are best met with the active assistance of both parents and teachers working in concert.

In this timely monograph, Dr. John Myers has provided a valuable resource for use in this new wave of parental involvement. It outlines the reasons for encouraging such involvement, identifies some of the roles parents may play, and then delineates the steps to be taken in establishing a program that taps the time and talents of parents and other adults in the instructional program. Descriptions of several related types of on-going programs that strengthen the school-home bond are also included. Many excellent suggestions that may be adapted to particular situations can be found in these reports from the field. This publication can be and should be put to use immediately.

John H. Lounsbury
Editor, NMSA Publications

Preface

While most of the research related to parent involvement in schools has been aimed at the elementary grades, the implications of parent involvement for middle grades education are overwhelming. Dozens of studies have demonstrated the value of teacher-parent-student partnerships at all levels of education. Success for such programs seems to hinge on two factors: 1) there must be a variety of parental roles, and 2) the involvement of parents must be long term. In programs where these two guidelines have been followed, and assuming other general supportive factors exist, the result in educational terms have been impressive.

It has been said that the "teacher is the key" to the success of any educational endeavor. There is a great deal of truth in that assertion, but we need to remember that a teacher, even a good one, cannot do it all alone. There are too many students with too many differing needs; there are too many non-teaching responsibilities nipping at a teacher's heels. A teacher may be the "key" to unlocking a child's mind, but excellence in education today requires multiple keys. Research suggests that, if the teacher is the primary "key," then the parent runs a close second. In the best of all possible educational worlds the teacher and parent become equal partners in the education of the child. This monograph will offer suggestions to teachers and administrators that will facilitate the important partnership in the middle grades.

1

Why Involve Parents In Middle School Programs?

When one examines the body of research on parent involvement in schools, it is difficult to understand why more schools do not do a better job of utilizing this valuable resource. After all, who has a more vested interest in the success of the child than the parents themselves? Every student who crosses the school's threshold usually comes with one or more adults who are vitally interested in his or her academic career. The middle school that does not capitalize on this resource is missing a golden opportunity . Elementary schools generally involve parents in school activities much more than secondary schools. Middle schools are in a position to pick up where the elementary school leaves off, by providing a variety of worthwhile parental roles in support of quality education. Too often, the junior high, which has emulated the high school has deterred parents from further involvement of any major scope. The middle school, on the other hand, as something of a fresh start is in an ideal position to promote its educational goals by making parents partners in the educational process. Certainly transescence is a time when youth are most in need of caring interaction with and support from their parents and other adults.

Although most research on parent involvement has centered on the elementary school level, there is no reason to assume that similar benefits would not accrue to middle schools that establish effective programs which involve parents in a variety of roles over longer periods of time. Among these benefits are:

1. **Parent involvement leads to improved academic performance on the part of students.** Students report an emotional and motivational boost when their parents are actively involved in school programs. By their involvement, the parents show the student that school is important, and that they are willing to invest their time to assure its quality. Studies at the elementary level suggest that academic gains made by students whose parents are involved tend to be sustained longer than those gains made by students whose parents are not so involved. While all students benefit from parental involvement in the school, the children of those parents who are themselves involved are likely to benefit the most.

2. **Parents become closer to their children as school becomes a shared experience, a family experience.** In addition, parents become more familiar with that unique creature we call a "transescent." They understand the age group better,

and the age group understands them better as well. Since they are often physically present in the school, parents are also in a position to share the successes of their child, as well as the failures.

3. **Relations between home and school, as well as between the school and community, improve as parents become involved.** What goes on at school is no longer a mystery; the child's teacher is no longer just a name. Such close cooperation builds support for school programs in the community—support that can be of great value in times of crisis, financial or otherwise. Good communication with the community is worth its weight in gold to today's middle school.

4. **Parents have the skills needed to help students in the classroom, both academically and socially.** Parents need not, and should not, be limited to mundane tasks in the classroom or in other areas; they are often capable of creative thought and should be fully utilized. When fully utilized, parents report that their service to the school is rewarding, and busy teachers report that parent volunteers have lightened their workloads. Grandparents and other adults are equally able to serve and may be more readily available. Some teachers initially have shied away from using volunteers for a variety of reasons, even though they desire a closer home-school relationship. Once teachers understand the myriad ways in which parents and other adults can share their burdens, excuses like "I don't know how to use a volunteer" or "I don't have time for them" quickly disappear. It is worth noting, however, that teacher and parent reactions to the partnership are directly related to the quality of the volunteer program itself. Good programs produce good results.

5. **Students need all the extra support and understanding their parents can give them, both at home and at school.** They are in a time of great physical, psychological, and emotional change. Some are young adults; others in the same classroom are still children. No one teacher can meet all the many needs of these varied transescents, but parents and other volunteers can help to fill the gaps. Formal studies and considerable experience show that parents and other adults active in school programs have a generally positive effect on student behavior. In cases where child and parent work in close proximity in the school setting, improvements in individual student behaviors may be impressive.

6. Finally, there is the obvious benefit that accrues because **services performed by parents and other volunteers do not cost anything.** While you might believe that the savings, at first glance, are slight, a close look at some of the research related to volunteer programs in the schools might surprise you. One county school system in rural Tennessee, which had an extensive volunteer program in its schools, calculated how much money it would have cost to purchase the services (at minimum wage) performed by its volunteers and found that the figure for one school year exceeded $275,000.00. Volunteers in general can be a fine investment; parents, in particular, represent an investment not only in terms of dollars, but also in terms of family relationships and an understanding of school programs and goals.

2

How Can Parents Help The Middle School Program?

Depending on their individual talents and interests, parents can do virtually anything that needs doing. The voluminous data gathered by volunteer programs across the country over the past decade suggest that parents, grandparents, and other volunteers are a neglected resource, a resource capable of filling almost any educational need. The hard part, of course, is finding the volunteers with the particular skills needed and matching them with the jobs that need doing. Theoretically, there is virtually *nothing* a parent cannot do. "Wait a minute," you say, "a parent is not a certified classroom teacher, and cannot be given the responsibilities of a certified teacher." You had best look again for in any community you might be surprised to learn how many parents are non-practicing but certified teachers. In one case a qualified substitute could not be found for a fifth grade class while the regular teacher took a long leave of absence; finally, the school principal approached a parent, who had been an elementary teacher, and convinced her to come back into the profession for a few months. This enterprising administrator recognized that parents are capable of being full partners in the educational process, and he had taken time to learn something about the skills and talents of the school's parents in advance. When the need arose, he already knew where to look to augment his substitute list. The parent, incidentally, did a superb job and has since become a regular substitute at the school.

It is worth noting that one of the most neglected parent roles in the middle school, or at any other grade level, is that of "learner." Parent volunteers are usually good learners and can be taught to do specific jobs, from how to operate the school's microcomputer to how to conduct vision screening for students. Parents come with skills and general ability upon which the school, and the individual teacher, can build. It is well worth the time it takes to develop these resources, and the best way is through a school-wide "Parent Involvement Program," or PIP. Later on in this monograph, such a program will be discussed at some length.

WAYS VOLUNTEERS CAN SERVE A MIDDLE SCHOOL

Instructional Roles: While available parents with teaching certificates may be limited, every parent has something to give from his or her experiences. A parent with skills in photography, or dance, or bird-watching could come into the middle school as a classroom resource—both as a guest instructor and as a source of support materials for a particular unit. Parents employed in the health professions can add another dimension to classroom instruction related to drug or sex education. Business men and women are parents too, and may provide the school with interesting sites for field trips—from a working cattle farm to a television studio. Parents can also be contacts to other businesses, agencies, and institutions in the community. Don't forget to consider parental hobbies too; you may discover parents who would jump at the opportunity to interest middle schoolers in their own avocations and teach in a mini-course program. You might even find some qualified parental "club advisers," or "assistant coaches" for the school intramural program. Parents can also work as tutors on a one-to-one basis, bringing students who are behind up to date or challenging those students who want to move ahead. Parental support can be a key to effective individualization of instruction. The parent volunteer can even be a curriculum planner—a full member of the instructional "team."

Instructional Support Roles: Parents can be involved in direct instructional support in many ways. They can evaluate and develop classroom instructional materials; they can take charge of classroom (or school) bulletin boards. With proper guidance, parent volunteers can do clerical tasks such as typing, filing, duplicating, and collecting monies. They can grade papers; they can chaperone field trips. An interested parent could locate, evaluate, and show audio-visual materials in the classroom. Parents can serve as "home base" assistants, or as "home room mothers." They can serve on curriculum committees or as non-teaching "team" members. They can relieve teachers of much of the "administrivia" associated with teaching in today's middle schools.

Other Roles: Although far from being all-inclusive, the parental roles that follow can also contribute to an effective middle school program. Parents may also serve as:

—audience for student presentations, either at a classroom or school-wide level.

—aides to the school librarian, the office staff, the school nurse, the cafeteria, or the maintenance staff.

—coordinators of the school volunteer program. The principal and the teacher need not be burdened with the everyday operation of a Parent Involvement Program.

—members of school-wide committees dealing with everything from curricular design to hiring new teachers. If parents are to be full members of the instructional team, then they must also be involved in the formation of policy and procedures at the school-wide level.

—special projects committee members, handling such matters as the Spring Carnival, funds for renovation of the playground, and myriad other projects that need doing.

—maintenance and custodial assistants, especially in support of special projects. One parent group first raised money in their county to pay for a new air conditioning system for a small rural school and then installed it themselves.

—recruiters of other volunteers. One of the lessons learned from the larger school volunteer programs across the nation is that the best way to recruit is "each one get one." When one parent volunteer is "hooked" on being involved in the school program, then he or she is your best salesperson for attracting other good volunteers.

The list of roles that volunteers can fill could be extended, but two major principles should be apparent.

1. Parent volunteers are *learners;* they can be trained to do what needs doing.
2. Parent volunteers can do virtually *anything.*

Armed with this positive outlook, you are now ready to consider establishing your own PIP—Parent Involvement Program.

3

How Can I Set Up A Parent Involvement Program?

Any successful partnership requires clear communication among the partners, and the educational partnership is no exception. Indeed, the key element in developing and implementing any PIP is to first establish clear and varied lines of communication between the school and the home. Involving parents in the middle school program is somewhat like a marriage; without open lines of communication between partners, the venture is likely to end up on the rocks. A PIP will tend to improve communication even more, but there must also be a degree of open communication with which to begin. Parents must know what the school is about, and must have a means for expressing their needs to school authorities; likewise, the school must know what is going on at home and in the community. This bond of mutual understanding and communication is the basis upon which a successful program of parent involvement must be built.

This bond normally exists in the elementary grades in the form of active parent-teacher organizations, homeroom mothers, and a variety of other roles. The junior high school model, however, has tended to follow the lead of the high school in minimizing parental roles in the academic program. Indeed, teachers and parents have been conditioned to feel uncomfortable in one another's presence in the middle grades and above. If you doubt this assertion, talk to some parents and teachers. Or, better yet, if you have children in both elementary and secondary schools, ask the teachers and principals at both schools for permission to sit in on your children's classes for a day, or even an hour. Take note of the verbal and non-verbal reactions you get. The important point here is that, in the middle school, you are quite likely to have to educate parents as a group before you can involve them willingly in the educational process. Parents must realize that they have a right and a responsibility to be intimately involved in the education of their children. This process of education begins with the establishment of clear means of communication.

Utilize Various Approaches to Communicate

There are numerous approaches to building communication, but the following are likely to be especially effective:

—build and maintain a strong parent-teacher organization. Your parents come to you with a history of involvement in some sort of organization at the elementary level. Seize the opportunity, even before their children arrive at your school, to let them know that there are roles for them and that they are expected to take an active part in their child's schooling. Parent-teacher organizations that are only peripheral to the real business of the school, that only exist to run the "carnival" once a year, are a waste of resources. An effective parent-teacher group must be involved in all facets of the middle school program, and needs the support of teachers and administrators to function optimally.

—implement an "open door" policy. In an effective middle school, administrators and teachers should be readily accessible to parents. Parents who are treated with courtesy, understanding, and tact will not abuse the "open door" privilege. Administrators and teachers need to be willing to listen to what parents have to say, and weigh comments as one would the advice of a business partner. It is unfortunate that, in many schools, conferences between parent and teacher, or parent and principal, occur only when there is some problem. Rare is the occasion when a parent stops by to offer a fund-raising suggestion, or an idea for a field trip. Traditionally, the breadth of discussion topics between parents and professional educators has been somewhat narrow.

—establish a school newsletter that goes home, by mail, at least quarterly. Come up with a catchy title, and fill it with news about what is going on at school. Recognize teacher and parent, as well as student, achievement. Remind parents of up-coming events. Include a personal note from the principal. Tell parents what the school needs. Ask for volunteers. The newsletter could be a joint venture of the school and the parent-teacher organization. If you have a parent involvement program of any size, do a quarterly PIP newsletter as well. It will make the parent volunteers feel special, and give the program high visibility. You might even have a "volunteer" insert to the school newsletter as another option. The PIP newsletter or insert should be the responsibility of the PIP coordinator.

—start things off right; when students first come to the school, involve parents in the orientation. The principal and faculty might send parents a personal letter of invitation. The traditional "open house" several weeks after school begins is not really adequate. A full-fledged orientation program for parents will involve home mailings, a well planned formal program for parents, as well as follow-up contacts. Perhaps a social-orientation event (afternoon barbecue on the weekend, or a pancake breakfast) sponsored by the parent-teacher organization for newcomer parents would be an effective vehicle.

—encourage the use of personal notes and telephone calls from teachers to parents. Provide each teacher with some attractive note-paper materials, and urge their use. Also encourage teachers to call parents on the telephone, not just at times of crisis, but also to ask for help and to deliver good news. Too many teachers contact parents only when there is trouble, or prefer to "pass the buck" to the principal. How can we have a partnership, if the partners never communicate with one another?

—mail special materials home. A number of professional organizations (the National Middle School Association, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, and the National Council of Teachers of English, and others) offer a variety of fliers and booklets that are suitable for mailing to parents. There are materials that tell parents how to help children study and develop better reading skills; there are materials that explain what middle schools are all about; there are still others that deal with careers, nutrition, and many other subjects. You can develop your own materials as well, fliers about upcoming events or materials for recruiting parents and other volunteers. The possibilities for mailings that keep the school highly visible to parents are extensive.

—conduct special events during the year. Enlist the help of the parent-teacher organization and other volunteers to plan the school carnival. Consider weekend activities that will draw the family as a unit. Some schools have scheduled a week-day pancake breakfast to encourage working parents to come to school with their child one morning before going to work. Get parents into the school and communicate with them while they are there. Utilize the parent-teacher organization meetings properly. Make them educational opportunities. A strong organization will encourage both parents and teachers to attend, and to get further involved.

—conduct parent surveys to learn what qualifications and skills your parents possess. Develop a short survey instrument that can be used as part of the orientation process, filled out at a school event, or mailed home. Find out what parents do for a living, what their hobbies are, whether or not they would be willing to donate any time or their skills to the school. Find out which parents have teacher certification, which have other applicable experience, which have coached community sports programs. Unless you have an unlimited pool from which to draw your volunteers, such a survey is important, since it will pinpoint the various parental resources. The parent who sells insurance by day may be a skilled photographer or artisan by night. Such folks make fine classroom resources. You'll never know what resources are out there, unless you survey to find out.

—institute a "welcome wagon" to greet new arrivals during the school year. Parent volunteers serve beautifully in such a role. They can visit the home and personally orient the parent to the school and community. It would be nice if one of the child's teachers went along. Contact by the principal would be effective as well. It might be possible for the principal to arrange the "welcome wagon" visit telephonically. Most families who receive a warm reception will recognize it as an invitation to become further involved.

—encourage the use of "telephone chains" to put a personal touch in spreading news. Once more, parent volunteers can be a great help. If teacher A is planning something for her homeroom, and wants to invite each parent, she could call them all herself—or, she could call two parents, each of whom would call two more, who would call two, and so on. The same thing works equally well on a school-wide basis.

—early in the year, publish a calendar of events suitable for posting at school and at home. If parents know far ahead of time what events are coming, and if they are reminded at the appropriate time, they are more likely to attend. Little slips of dittoed paper that are given to students to take home one week before the PTA meeting are not, by themselves, likely to boost attendance much. It is conceivable that a fine wall calendar, imprinted with the school events, might make an excellent fund raiser as well. Most families seem to have some kind of calendar posted somewhere in their homes. These normally come from area businesses, or at a handsome price from the local book, card, or gift shop. Why could they not come from the middle school?

With multiple lines of communication in place, you are now in a position to begin developing an effective PIP.

Steps in Establishing a Parent Involvement Program

Step 1: The first step in setting up a PIP is to find out what kind of help is needed—in short, conduct a needs assessment. Survey teachers; seek input from parents and other members of the community. Ask students; ask the janitor, the librarian, the cafeteria staff. In order to secure a full range of suggestions, you may have to sell them first on the idea that a volunteer can do just about anything. Make a strong effort to develop a valid listing of needs. It does not matter whether the program is school-wide, or just a single teacher planning for her own classroom; a needs assessment is the place to start.

Step 2: While the needs assessment is underway, if not before, step two should be initiated: selection of a program coordinator. The principal should not assume the role of "coordinator" as an additional duty, and the same holds true for most other members of the school staff and faculty. Experience has shown that there is a direct relationship between the quality of a volunteer program and the dedication of the coordinator. The coordinator is the key individual in the program, someone for whom PIP is a priority. The coordinator should be a dynamic, committed individual, with good interpersonal kills and a strong interest in the program. The larger the program, the greater the need for a competent coordinator who has the time, skills, interest, and dedication to make the program a success. The possibility of providing some monetary compensation for the coordinator should be investigated. Even a small salary tends to generate a sense of committment. A budget administered by the coordinator will also build a sense of responsibility in the individual who serves in the role. Often, volunteer programs that involve no salary or control over fiscal resources are viewed casually by the persons running them whereas monetary factors encourage a more businesslike contractual arrangement. Many fine volunteer programs in individual middle schools do exist that are coordinated by part-time, unpaid volunteers—usually parents who possess the skills and experience to make their greatest contribution in that role. It takes, however, a very dedicated individual to serve over the long term in what may prove a very demanding role. If you have surveyed the skills and

experiences of non-working parents, and you have a strong and active parent-teacher organization, you should not need to look far to find a suitable candidate or two. If you cannot identify an individual willing to take the coordinator's role, consider appointing co-coordinators for the program; responsibilities can be divided and each person can provide moral support for the other. Keep in mind that the care with which this key role is filled is likely to determine the degree of success of the volunteer program. Realistically, in a typical middle school PIP, your best bet is a dedicated and dynamic parent with the skills, time, and interest to invest in the program. The decision on who is appointed should be made by the principal, with reactions on candidates from a nominating committee composed of parent and teacher representatives.

Once you find an individual to assume the coordinator's role, it is the job of the building principal to make the new coordinator's job as important and pleasant as possible. Do not casually recruit a coordinator then leave the individual to sink or swim.

Step 3: Once the coordinator is appointed and the results of the needs assessment are available, the time has come to match up needs with resources. If a survey of parent skills, experiences, and qualifications has not already been done, now is the time to do so. The principal should, then, chair a committee composed of both teacher and parent representatives to prioritize the identified needs and allot identified personnel resources. Needs that cannot be met with already identified resources among the parents might be met by soliciting volunteers from the community who are not parents. The newly appointed coordinator should have a major role in this entire process and could well become the prime leader as needs and resources are balanced.

Step 4: The fourth step involves educating teachers and other school personnel as to the value of parent volunteers. This step too should have been initiated earlier. Experience has shown that teachers do not automatically jump at the opportunity to utilize a volunteer; they do not always see the many ways in which volunteers can help them do a better job. At first consideration, some teachers are likely to view parent volunteers as a "bother" and see them as intruders in the classroom. Some teachers will initially be uneasy at the thought of a parent in their classroom "watching me teach." Others will claim that they haven't time to plan something for the parent to do, or that they do not know how to utilize a volunteer. Both of these assertions are generally true: teachers in the middle grades are very busy people and they have not been trained to utilize volunteers. It then becomes the responsibility of the coordinator and the school administration to work with the faculty so that they see how volunteers can be a real boon to their busy schedules. A little time invested up-front in developing parent roles in the classroom can reap handsome rewards in terms of time saved in the long run. And, helping teachers to think in terms of roles for parent volunteers is not difficult. Most teachers really want help, and most see a partnership with parents

as a legitimate relationship. A well prepared coordinator can talk about the Parent Involvement Program at general in-service or departmental meetings, can distribute literature on the effectiveness of volunteer programs to teacher mailboxes, and can visit classrooms to discuss specific ways in which specific needs might be met. The coordinator will be able to judge the degree of "teacher education" needed by the results of the teacher portion of the needs assessment done as step one. If responses were skimpy, then more preparation is probably needed. The principal should also do some "teacher education" as part of step one, prior to seeking teacher reactions.

In most cases, the needs assessment will identify a great number of ways in which teachers believe they can utilize volunteers. Middle grades educators generally recognize a "good deal" when they see it, and step four should not present a situation calling for hard sell. Rather, it is an opportunity to expand the list of possible parent roles, and to discuss the nuts and bolts of working with classroom volunteers in a formal program. The selling of the concept and the program to faculty and staff is, however, vital to the success of any volunteer program for a program not supported by the faculty is doomed to failure. Once launched, of course, a well planned PIP will sell itself.

Step 5: With the needs and resources analyzed and a coordinator in place, the administrative routines of the program operation should begin to gel. While the coordinator and administration are preparing teachers for the PIP and working out details, the coordinator should concentrate on the fifth step of the process: recruitment of parent volunteers. If parents have already been identified through an earlier survey to meet certain needs, then direct contact is appropriate. A telephone call is probably the best approach for the initial contact. Through newsletters or community newspaper stories, parents should already be aware that a PIP is being developed. Accordingly, the coordinator's call should come as no great surprise. Before committing a parent to the program, however, it is essential that the parent meets certain criteria. It is not enough for the parent simply to possess the skills needed by the school—the parent must also be the type of person who will relate to the students, and who is sincerely interested in performing this valuable service. The only way to assess these somewhat nebulous qualities is through an interview procedure. All candidates for recruitment should be personally interviewed by the PIP coordinator. Candidates should be asked to fill out some type of application form and may even be asked to provide a reference or two. While such procedures may seem stringent for a small middle school, where everyone knows everyone else, they are essential for larger programs. Regardless of size or location, you should be aware that there are a few parents, or other citizens, who seek involvement in school programs for the wrong reasons. You must have some criteria and procedures that will assist in weeding out person who should not be involved.

If someone has not been identified to meet a given need, then the coordinator

must work through the parent-teacher organization, through mailings to the home, and through other contacts to recruit. It may be necessary to go beyond the parents group to the general community to find a certain volunteer. Give consideration to *grand*parents. They tend to have more time available than parents, more experience in living, and provide middle graders with needed opportunities for intergenerational experiences. Older volunteers are often your best volunteers, for a vareity of reasons. Parents can also be sources of leads to other volunteers—neighbors, co-workers, friends. You will also discover that the best recruiting method is "each one get one;" that is to say, your present volunteers are your best recruiters. If they are enthusiastic about the PIP and their roles, they will tell others about it. Their enthusiasm is highly contagious.

Whatever procedure is developed for recruitment and screening of applicants, the key is to get the right people into the program—people who care about education and meeting the needs of students, people who want to be full partners in the educational process.

Step 6: Once volunteers have been recruited, they must be oriented and trained. You cannot expect your volunteers to "fit right in." Some may quickly take hold, but the majority will find today's middle level school a foreign environment and need assistance. Most of your volunteers will have been out of school themselves for a number of years; their only view of life in a middle school environment may be based on their own experiences in a junior high school some years back. They may be more likely to relate to a traditional secondary model than that of the emerging middle school. They will not understand team planning, flexible schedules, unified arts programs, and other facets of middle school education. They must be oriented to the middle school philosophy as it exists in your school, and to the day to day operations of the school. This can be done through written handouts, coordinator produced media presentations, volunteer handbooks, in-service sessions, and on-site visitations within the school.

While orienting the new volunteers to the school and its programs, the coordinator will also have the opportunity to learn more about the volunteers as individuals. This becomes important when placing the parents in particular roles, since an effort should be made to match jobs to the interests of the individual and to match personalities of parents with those of the school staff and faculty. The ideal placement occurs when the volunteer is doing something that he or she wants to do and has an excellent rapport with his or her supervisor. Human differences being what they are, some types of people do not work well with others. A good coordinator develops a knack for making the best placements, and learns to keep an eye open for any problems that might develop between educational partners. Once the placement of a volunteer is made, then the coordinator assists the teacher or staff member, as needed, in training the volunteer for the desired role. And, once again, it is worth recalling that a school volunteer can be trained to do virtually anything that needs doing.

Step 7: Now that the parent volunteers are trained and placed, the coordinator really begins the coordination process. Essentially, the coordinator's job at this point is to monitor the program and to implement a continuous process of evaluation and adjustment. The coordinator needs to visit classrooms and other worksites, making sure that all is going as it should. Sometimes needs change; sometimes people change. It is essential that the coordinator keep a close watch on the PIP in order to make adjustments when necessary and do identify new needs. During this time a pool of additional prospective parent volunteers should be developed, since some volunteers will be lost through a natural attrition process—they will move away, lose interest, become ill, take a paying job, or be lost to the program in some other manner. The coordinator must also develop communications networks with the parents through newsletters, in-service sessions, or other means. The volunteer needs to have easy access to the coordinator on a regular basis, and vice versa, if the coordinator is to remain aware of what is happening in the program. Once the volunteers are out in the classrooms and other work sites, it is easy to lose touch.

Step 8: One of the major roles of the coordinator is to provide recognition for parent volunteers and the staff and faculty members who utilize them. A "thank you" banquet at the end of the school year is a good idea, but it is not enough. Certificates of appreciation are also appropriate, but they are not enough. Morale building is a continual process for all persons involved. Teachers need to let volunteers know that they are doing a good job in an on-going way, and parent volunteers need to let their supervisors know that they value and enjoy their service. The coordinator can give everyone positive reinforcement in a variety of ways. Letters of appreciation from the coordinator (if they are not form letters) are nice, as are personal letters from the principal. A feature article in the local newspaper can be very rewarding. A creative coordinator will come up with a variety of ways to recognize people; sometimes just a word at the right time is all that's needed.

Step 9: At the same time that the coordinator is maintaining morale, he or she should also be working to keep the program a "high profile" priority in the school and community. Articles in the local paper concerning school activities supported by the PIP are an excellent means. Publishing a PIP newsletter is another; the newsletter lets everyone know what volunteers are doing in the school and recognizes hard working volunteers. The presence of flyers that may be used for recruiting and a "PIP Handbook" also help to keep the program before the eyes of the public. Such materials can be mailed as a courtesy to board members, as well as community and business leaders and organizations. Such a mailing may even turn up a few more volunteers. Some schools have approached area businesses and industries for direct support for volunteer programs, both monetary and personel. Some businesses have donated materials in support of volunteer projects.

Step 10: The final step is to conduct a periodic formal evaluation of the program. The coordinator should develop a set of criteria for evaluating program success and produce an annual report that includes demographic data on numbers and types of volunteers, specific projects supported, and other pertinent information. While general positive evaluations of participants are helpful, the more specific and objective evaluative data that can be provided the better. It is also worthwhile to keep track of the number of volunteer hours donated and, using the current minimum wage figure, to compute how much money the school would have had to pay for those same services. A good annual report will justify an expanded program, or an increased budget, for *next* year. Such a report is worth its weight in gold to a coordinator and principal approaching the board for additional funding for volunteer programs.

4

Are There Examples Of Other Types of Programs?

There are many fine parent involvement programs across the nation that operate in the manner outlined in the previous chapter. There are many other programs that involve parents in other ways. Some involve parents only in specific areas of the middle school program such as the exploratory activities. Some concentrate on parent education. No one "model" is right for every middle school, but a look at a few successful programs of other types should provide further ideas that may be applicable to a school's specific needs. The five programs profiled in the pages that follow have a record of success, and are worthy of examination. For more detailed information on any of these programs, please contact the individual listed at the conclusion of each project description.

A.
NEW WAYS TO INVOLVE PARENTS
Hopkins West Junior High
Minnetonka, Minnesota

At Hopkins West we have several fairly detailed ways in which our parents are included. In 1976 a group of parents came to school to express concerns about problems and a willingness to help. They suggested a model similar to the "room mother" system used in many elementary schools. Essentially that system enlists the help of a mother to work at P.T.A. functions, to find volunteers for field trips or other activities, and in general to support the teacher's efforts in any way she can. Because students at West Junior High School are scheduled in a modified version of the fluid block, it was possible to match parents as representatives of a given section of students. A group of parents then becomes identified with a given interdisciplinary team — hence the label, "team parent." Apart from the designation which associates a parent with a particular teacher or team there is little resemblance to the usual role of a "room mother."

During the nine years this system has been in operation, its most unique

characteristics have been involvement, support, and flexibility. The involvement is most evident in the willingness on the part of parents to attend team meetings with their group of teacher advisors at 7:30 a.m. For the most part they are there to learn about their school and to gather information about the way their team of teachers deals with their kids. A part of a team parent's responsibility is to serve as a liaison between the teachers and other parents on the team. One of the first mailings each year carries a list of phone numbers for the various offices and contacts parents may elect to make with the school. Team parents' names and phones numbers are included on that list. The number of parents who elect to call a team parent rather than a teacher, counselor, or administrator is small, but the service provided in those few cases is critically important. Such calls generally are made by parents who have a deep concern but either don't want to bother the school or fear reprisal by the school. These calls represent contacts the school ordinarily would never even know about. Virtually all of these issues are successfully resolved.

Further involvement comes through regular meetings of team parents with the building principal. Each fall parents elect topics they wish to cover during the course of the year. In addition, the principal and other staff members will submit problems to the parent group for their study, consideration, and reactions. Topics are not limited in any way. Task forces are organized when necessary, and resulting recommendations from parents have resulted directly in enriched curricular activities for students (e.g., microcomputer literacy) as well as some visionary approaches to problems like drug education.

Parental support is visible in many other ways. When evening programs are planned for parents, the team parents organize a telephone calling network that reminds all parents about the meeting's purpose and encourages attendance. Field trips, party chaperones, and other volunteer activities are promoted through this group. Some team parents organize teacher appreciation events at the end of the school year which provide dramatic intrinsic rewards for many of our staff members. West Junior High School receives informal support in supermarkets, churches, and various social gatherings throughout the community which can be directly linked to the fact that many parents are actively involved in and well-informed about the affairs of their school.

Flexibility has been a hallmark of this program from its inception. It is designed first to meet the needs of the parents who make up the organization. Anyone who is interested can signal that interest by signing up at orientation for incoming seventh graders or new students. Other invitations are sent out early in the year. Interested parents are contacted by team parent coordinators who explain the various functions of the program. Parents who elect to participate are welcome. A given section may have several parents. As one would expect, many parents of the entering seventh graders are attracted to participate. Anyone who finds the program inappropriate for his or her needs can call for a revision or simply

drop out. In some instances groups of parents and teachers become very close; in other cases their relationship remains fairly formal. In other words, this program accommodates the participants rather than the other way around.

The team parent program at West has provided many parents with ways to become meaningfully involved with their school. Some parents choose the bi-weekly, early morning meetings with their team of teachers. Others may elect to attend the school-wide meetings with staff representatives and the principal. In still other cases parents are involved in curriculum issues and in visiting neighboring schools for purposes of comparisons. A few parents elect to be a part of as many of these events as they can manage. Parents co-ordinate these activities and provide the leadership and impetus for the continued existence of their organization. The teams of teachers and parents have developed a sense of mutual respect for one another's legitimate interests and deep commitments. No confidentiality has been violated. Communication about what is being taught and the school's general expectations for students replaces the void that results from the typical early adolescent's assessment of school as "stupid," "boring," or "unfair." Parents with a high need for information and involvement have been respectfully accommodated. When troublesome issues arise, as they surely do in all middle-level schools, a built-in group of parents stands ready to participate in resolving them. Throughout the program's existence countless problems have been processed through this organization; most of them have been successfully resolved.

And, probably most important of all, teachers have learned that there are still a large number of parents who care very much about their children and about education. At the same time, parents have learned the same thing about the teachers. That sense of caring needs expression in order to persist. Our parents, together with many of our staff members, have found other means to express their concern. One group of parents and staff put together a list of recommended procedures for home parties. They brought the list to our team parents for endorsement and subsequently presented it to an open forum of all our parents for final ratification. Their final product was then mailed to all of our families as it appears below:

Suggested Ground Rules for Teenage Parties

1. *Parents or guardians responsible for the party should call and inform the parents of the invited guests of the time, location and type of activities planned. (This is the ideal, however, if the host/hostess does not call, parents of invited guests should feel free to call and ask for information concerning the party.)*
2. *Parents/guardians must be present at all parties. Parents should not only be physically present but visibly present.*
3. *Parents of guests are strongly urged to offer their assistance as chaperones at the party.*

4. *No drugs or alcohol are to be available at parties.*
5. *If someone is using drugs and or alcohol, his/her parents should be called to come and pick up their child.*
6. *Parents/guardians of guests are responsible for seeing that their children are taken to the party and picked up on time. (There is a bike safety law and a curfew law in this community)*
7. *If guests are invited to stay overnight, arrangements should be made ahead of time with the approval of both families.*
8. *If uninvited guests show up, they should be asked to leave. If necessary, the police should be called to help assist in their removal.*
9. *Explain to guests that if they leave the house or area that the party is given in, their parents will be called to come to pick them up.*
10. *Parties should be held only at established residences (homes) as opposed to parks, hotels, motels, etc.*
11. *Parents and the child giving the party should develop the guest list together. Make every effort to limit the number of guests. The chaperone/child ratio should take into consideration the kinds of activities that are planned. Parents should call upon adults to help out if needed.*

We, as parents, are in charge of the parties given in our homes and have a right to expect that our children and their guests will respect our ground rules.

In addition to party rules, our parents vigorously supported mandatory informational meetings about alcohol and other drugs. The requirement, which included students, is enforced in all cases where students are involved in after-school activities (about 75% of our student body).

Mandatory programs have obvious advantages over the typical offerings which depend upon the crowd appeal a given speaker may have or upon a drug related crisis to insure good attendance. Most schools have enough students involved in after school activities to generate an audience of hundreds. Large audiences make it possible to attract high quality speakers and/or run a variety of topics sponsored by a host of agencies on a single evening. Such a format makes it possible to provide parents as well as students with an excellent curriculum over a period of four to six years.

This statement was prepared by Dr. Robert St. Clair, Principal of Hopkins West Junior High School and was derived from a manuscript, "Changing Partnerships: New Ways to Involve Parents," which has been submitted for publication in ***Dissemination Services in the Middle Grades.***

B.

PROJECT ADOLESCENT

Amherst Middle School
Amherst, New Hampshire

Project Adolescent was a Title IV-C, three year, federally funded project that focused on improvement of educational programs and policies for the early adolescent. The project included ten schools in five New Hampshire districts: Amherst, Gilford, Hampstead, Londonderry, and Nashua. The project focused on increasing the understanding of the educators, students, and parents in the areas of age and learning characteristics as they relate to educational programs and policies. In the early stages of the project, a needs assessment was conducted; based on its results, the project then focused on the physical, social, and psychological characteristics of the early adolescent through a series of workshops, lectures, filmstrips, visitations, and readings. In an effort to improve understanding of the cognitive development of the student, Project Adolescent concentrated on the work of Jean Piaget and Herman Epstein. The project worked with parents to help them be more effective in their relationships with their children at home; the assumption, which was supported by the results of the project, was that increased understanding among parents, students, and teachers concerning the characteristics of the early adolescent would lead to more effective interaction among them.

The Amherst Program

Amherst's "Parent Awareness Program" was the most successful of the programs operated by the ten partipating schools. Although there were evening sessions for parents, as well as media coverage, during the first and third years of the project, the main thrust of the program occurred during the second year. In the fall of 1979, a group of five teachers and four parents (one per grade) first met to plan activities designed to bring parents and school together for the 1979-80 school year. This committee served as a liaison for communicating with parents about various activities and programs at the school. The four present representatives asked each "room mother" to telephone each family to inform them of evening meetings, as well as "Release Day" speakers. The school hosted a "Release Day" afternoon once per month, with excellent speakers who discussed the emerging adolescent. Many parents took advantage of these sessions; as a result, the room mother telephoners were often asked questions about the project, as well as questions about early adolescents in general. These questions were referred to the school or the parent representative, as appropriate. This direct telephonic approach helped to broaden home and community awareness of the project immensely.

The following evening programs were planned by the teachers and parents involved:

December: Parent Media Night began with the showing of the NASSP filmstrip "Passing Through from Childhood to Adolescence," and an introduction by Paul Collins, the Principal. Parents then chose one of the following small-group media presentations to attend: IALAC (I am loveable and capable) (grade 5); "Self-Incorporated" (grade 6); "Television & Values" (grade 7); and "Adolescent Conflict: Parent vs. Teens" (grade 8). All participants met again afterward for general discussion, after which attendees completed an evaluation form for the evening. Based on those comments, changes were made in programs for later dates in the year.

February: Age-Learner Characteristics of the Ten to Fourteen Year Old were discussed by a group of four teachers and one parent from the Project Adolescent Advisory Committee. Discussion centered around the showing of a video-tape in which David Elkind tested children utilizing Piaget's techniques for assessing cognitive development.

March: The PTA and Parent Awareness Committee co-sponsored a program on "TV and Values." A filmstrip and discussion on the influence of television on family life was the central theme of the evening. The school had already conducted a student "TV Survey" of grades 5-8, and the results were used that night as parents discussed the values inherent in the "top ten" programs that the students selected. After small group discussion, comments were then shared by the larger group in discussion of the positive and negative values noted.

April: Two presentations, IALAC and "Self-Incorporated," were repeated due to parental requests.

May: An "After School TV Special" titled "Where Do Teenagers Come From?" was shown to parents and students. The program had already been used in the classroom; a panel of seventh grade students had volunteered to offer their opinions of the show and share their feelings. Parents and students then divided into small groups for discussion; teachers acted as facilitators.

May: The PTA and PAC co-sponsored a speaker who addressed discipline, highlighting methods and approaches based on age and learner characteristics of the 10-14 year old.

In addition to the evening Parent Awareness Sessions, there were monthly articles on Project Adolescent in the local newspaper and in the PTA newsletter. A Project Adolescent Advisory Committee parent was also appointed to the PTA Executive Board. This enabled a closer involvement with the PTA in planning joint evening activities, thereby reducing the number of evenings parents were asked to attend.

Evaluation of Project Adolescent has shown the great value of parent involvement in the project; in fact, it has been necessary to form a panel of three teachers and one parent to respond to requests for in-service training and guest speakers about the project. Having a parent as a member of the panel group has proven to be an excellent idea, since first hand comments by a parent seem to be especially well received.

Helping parents understand their emerging adolescents is very important to parental understanding of good middle school programs, practices, and policies. Project Adolescence has proven itself one successful way to involve parents in middle school programming.

This section prepared by Joyce Kenne, Librarian, Amherst Middle School, Amherst, New Hampshire, 03031. Contact her for further information.

C.
A.B.E.S.
"ADOLESCENT BEHAVIOR EDUCATIONAL SEMINAR"
Humboldt Junior High
Dewey, Arizona

"I don't understand it. My child never behaved this way in elementary school. I don't know why he is causing all this trouble. It's the same way at home. I can't control him anymore. I've had it!" How many times have we, as educators, heard similar comments from parents of adolescents? How many parent conferences have ended in frustration, with a solution never really reached, only agreement that the student is having great difficulty adjusting to this new stage of developmental growth?

What is the answer to helping the parent better understand this period of adolescence? What support can the school offer to parents which will enable mothers and fathers to endure and survive this most difficult phase of their child's maturation process? Keeping in harmony with middle school education philosophy, the answer is to *educate the parents.* YES—*educate the parents!* Providing a meaningful and practical parent education program can help to minimize parent frustration and maximize parent understanding of this age group, while at the same time garner support for the type of educational program necessary and vital for effective middle school education.

The Adolescent Behavior Educational Seminar

The purpose of the A.B.E.S. (Adolescent Behavior Educational Seminar) project was to prepare a program on adolescent behavior to be presented to the parents of junior high/middle school age children. The relationship between the developmental stages of adolescent growth and typical behaviors displayed by adolescents was to be the main emphasis of the program. Not only were behavioral-

ly related problems associated with adolescent growth to be discussed, but also strategies and techniques designed to help parent effectively deal with these problems. The seminar program was to afford an opportunity for parents to become active participants in their children's education, to interact with professional adolescent specialists, to receive support from other parents struggling through the same difficult period, and to gain a better understanding of the school and its educational programs.

A.B.E.S. Program Objectives

Keeping in mind the general purpose of the A.B.E.S. project, listed below are the specific objectives upon which the program was patterned.

Objective One: To provide education to parents of adolescent children conerning the different states of developmental growth experienced during adolescence.

Objective Two: To inform parents about behaviorally related problems associated with adolescent growth and development

Objective Three: To suggest and demonstrate various strategies and techniques designed to help parents more effectively deal with problems encountered during their children's adolescent period.

Objective Four: To actively involve parents in their adolescent children's education and natural growth and development.

Objective Five: To provide an opportunity for parents to interact with recognized professionals from occupations associated with adolescents.

Objective Six: To provide parents with an opportunity for professional advice through the utilization of resource personnel from the surrounding community.

Objective Seven: To provide parents with an opportunity to share common concerns and problems with other parents experiencing similar difficulties.

Objective Eight: To garner support for the school system and its educational programs by providing a meaningful and applicable program of high quality.

Program Design

The A.B.E.S. program was designed to take place in nine consecutive sessions, meeting weekly, for approximately one and one-half to two hours. Each session featured a guest presenter, speaking to the parents about a specific topic related to adolescent development. At the conclusion of the presentation, each presenter was specifically requested to allow a period of time during which parents were free to interact with each other and with the guest speaker.

Presenters were solicited from the surrounding community and assigned a topic

which was directly related to their expertise and experience in dealing with this special age group of children. Represented in the group of professionals were physicians, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, guidance counselors, educators, and law enforcement personnel.

The topics offered were those recognized as major developmental stages of adolescent growth. Each session provided an explanation of the types of changes (physical, physiological, psychological, etc.) associated with each developmental stage, along with an explanation of how the display of new and different behaviors was related to these changes.

Participation and attendance at the seminar was on a voluntary basis. Although the design of the program was directed particularly at the parents of junior high/middle school age children, the program was open to the public. A publicity campaign utilizing the media was conducted prior to the initial session. This pre-seminar publicity campaign included timely articles in the newspaper outlining the program, public service announcements on the local radio and television stations, and guest appearances by the project director on local community talk show interviews. Weekly press releases were prepared during the seminar program to continually keep the public aware of the program and its progress.

Program Description

The A.B.E.S. program was divided into three main segments. Each phase of the program was presented as a major sub-category of the main topic—ADOLESCENCE. The first phase of the program established a firm basis for an understanding of the term, ADOLESCENCE. The second phase focused on the individual child and the relationships that typically develop and become predominant during adolescence. The third and final phase of the program acquainted participants with problems most often associated with, and commonly experienced by, children of this age level.

The first phase of the seminar comprised the first three sessions of the program. During these presentations, an attempt was made to define adolescence in terms of not only an accepted chronological time frame, but also from the standpoint of physical, physiological, and cognitive developmental stages. Included in the first meetings was information on typical as well as atypical growth patterns, pubescence, "normal" as opposed to "abnormal" development, highlights of Piaget's theory of cognitive development, creativity, I.Q., testing and measurement.

The next five sessions (Phase II) were devoted to the individual child and relationships that develop and/or deteriorate during transescence. The early adolescent was discussed in terms of self-concept, self-image, self-awareness and self-esteem. Adolescent morality was introduced along with a summary of Kohlberg's theory on moral development. Relationships which were subjects for discussion at these sessions included peer group, family and school.

The final session (Phase III) addressed adolescent problems. Emotional prob-

lems, juvenile delinquency, drugs, alcohol, and tobacco abuse, as well as academic and social problems were all subject to discussion at this session.

Program Evaluation

"It opened my eyes to problems and situations I did not realize existed!" "It reacquainted me with some of the problems I had in school . . ." "It gave me courage and understanding and was very important to me as a parent . . ." ". . . these sessions have helped me to open a new line of communication with our children . . ." These are but a few of the many positive comments received from parent-participants in the "Adolescent Behavior Educational Seminar." The results of the program, as indicated from the evaluations completed by the participants, were overwhelming.

Attendance at the seminar sessions ranged from a high of 42 to a low of 14. The mean attendance was roughly 24, with approximately 18 parents attending on a regular basis, missing only one or two meeting dates because of prior commitments.

The design of the program was appropriate and in harmony with the objectives stated in the initial proposal. The sequence of topics provided a logical developmental format that was easily understood and meaningful to the participants. The approach used by the presenters was not only in tune with the theme of the seminar, but was also reinforcing from week to week because the recurring messages they delivered related to the proper manner in which to effectively deal with adolescent problems.

One of the most exciting results which evolved from the program format was the enthusiastic participation by the parents during the question and answer portion of each night's session. Parents were encouraged and supported by other parents as well as the guest speakers. Parents and presenters alike shared common problems and concerns. What a relief for parents to discover that they were not alone in facing some of the more difficult times experienced by adolescents and their parents!

All participants indicated not only a need, but also a desire, for more programs of a similar nature. The success of the program has led to the formulation of plans for future programs. Included in designs for future programs are plans to include students as participants and presenters, to modify the program for classroom implementation, to continue the present program, and add a series of mini-seminars on each main topic to allow for more in-depth exploration.

Conclusions

Programs of this nature can be beneficial not only to the parents and children, but also to the school. The behavior of students at school can be improved as a result of better parental understanding of the problems associated with adolescent development. Although the effect that such a program has can not be measured

within a short period of time, a continuing and ongoing program should reflect behavior changes over a longer period of time. Parental involvement in their children's education should be enhanced as a result of the program as the parent becomes more aware and sensitive of their adolescent children's needs and concerns.

This section prepared by Gary A. Batsell, Principal, Humboldt Junior High School, Dewey, Arizona 86327. It appeared as an article in the November 1983 ***Middle School Journal.***

D.
SUCCESSFUL HOME/SCHOOL INTERACTION AT HINES MIDDLE SCHOOL
Newport News, Virginia

One of the most recommended but least implemented tenets of the middle school concept is that parents should receive many positive communications from the school. Ideally, teachers should contact the homes of all students enrolled in their classes. While few schools approach this ideal, the Hines Middle School in Newport News, Virginia, has far exceeded it. In 1984 at Hines, 72 teachers wrote 23,752 notes or letters, called home 6,723 times, held 1,986 parent conferences, and made 208 home visits. Most of these contacts were positive in nature. The resulting positive effects on parent support, student self-concept and motivation, school spirit, staff morale, reduction of discipline problems, and respect for school property have been dramatic.

The Hines Middle School opened in 1981 as part of a Newport News Public School System grade reorganization plan mandated by a United States District Court desegregation order. Each of the nine middle schools formed under the plan has taken a somewhat individual approach to implement the system's middle school concept, which states that the "goals of the middle school should be to make provision for the academic, physical, personal and cultural needs of the students during their transition from elementary to high school." At the Hines Middle School, implementation of this philosophy has focused on development of a strong parent-school cooperative relationship.

The principal of Hines, B.C. James, launched 1981 as the year for the "Successful Elimination of Xenophobia" (the fear of strange and new things). There was a new administrative team, a new student body, a 98% new teaching staff, a new organizational concept, and even the 32 year old school had a new name. Because he felt it was critical to get the community to understand the things that were to be different, James mandated that there be an all-out effort to involve parents in as many ways as possible in the school.

The foundation for implementing this mandate was a Teacher Advisory Program and an organizational structure built around interdisciplinary teaching teams. Time is available for students to meet with their teacher advisors. TA time scheduled at the beginning of each day gives each student a chance to develop a relationship with a significant adult in his life. The teacher advisor gets a chance to listen to a concern brought from home or to react to an incident that happened on the bus coming to school that might affect the student's day. These interactions provide teachers an understanding which is invaluable in building successful home/school interactions and in helping meet the individual needs of students.

At Hines, the teachers are organized into teams. Most of the teams are made up of two teachers at the sixth grade level, three at the seventh grade level, and four at the eighth grade level. Each team is given daily planning time. Out of the teams' activities and planning come many of the successful activities which involve parents and help them to feel a part of the school's program.

Specific Approaches To School/Parent Involvement

Before school begins each year, each student and his parents receive a *welcoming letter*. The letter outlines the general expectancies for students, from the dress code to schedules, bus routes, etc. Each teacher advisor is required to make a phone contact with the home in addition to the letter. This gives the teacher an opportunity to introduce himself to the parent and extend a personal welcome to the student.

Throughout the school year, teachers are required to *maintain contact with parents through notes and letters, phone calls,* or where possible, home visits. Generally, if the message to be sent home is of a positive nature, teachers use such devices as "Smile-grams" or form letters. While some phone calls are used to deliver negative comments, teachers try hard to balance their remarks with positive ones too. As a result, many parents have reported that it was a welcome surprise to get positive calls about their children.

Home visits are not at all uncommon and are made either individually or by teams. Those who have made these visits feel strongly about their benefits. One particularly poignant moment of understanding occurred for a teacher one day as she stood on the front porch talking to the mother of a child in her class. The mother explained that she seldom saw her child because she left for one job at 7:00 A.M., got home at 4:00 P.M. and left for a second job shortly thereafter, returning home again at 11:00 P.M. As she listened, the teacher suddenly understood why the child would not work independently for more than a brief few minutes, complained often, and generally demanded more than the usual amount of her attention. As many teachers report, the home visit is often the last missing piece to understanding a particular child's motivation problems. Parents, on the other hand, see the visiting teacher as a caring, sensitive, and sympathetic human being. Greater home support generally results.

Teachers also hold *parent conferences* either during school hours, or in the

case of at least one team, agree to stay at school until 5:30 one day a week to meet working parents.

As reported earlier, the numbers of these home contacts made in a year's time are enormous. However, they require only a few minutes of teachers' busy schedules each day.

In addition to home contacts by teachers, representatives in a Room Parent Program are responsible for the *Parent-Teacher-Association membership* within each homeroom and keep parents informed about various school related activities. These "key communicators" are vital in explaining the Hines Middle School activities to other parents and community members.

Each year several *major school events* are designed especially to get the parents into the school so they can become a part of the learning process and see at first hand some of the experiences their children have enjoyed at school. Back to School Night, Fall Festival, Expo, and Awards Night provide a chance for parents and community members to learn what the school is doing educationally for children.

On *Back to School Night*, parents follow their children's schedules, with the exception of lunch, and get a chance to meet teachers. Teachers explain their plans and goals for the year so that parents can gain an understanding of the instructional program for the year.

Fall Festival, held in late October, is organized around a festive theme. Teams within the school decide what event they will sponsor. This past year one team sponsored square dancing in a small gymnasium converted into a barn atmosphere with bales of hay and cornstalks. Another team sponsored a Gong Show, while another compiled a cookbook of favorite recipes of middle school students for sale at a nominal fee. Others sold hot apple cider and baked goods. Monies raised by the teams could be spent at the discretion of the administration for school related activities later in the year.

Expo, held late in the spring, is perhaps the most ambitious program sponsored by the school. The purpose of Expo is to display for parents the outgrowth of learnings that have taken place in the school. It is a night to show the academic achievements of the students. To do this many teams develop interdisciplinary units in which all subjects are interrelated. Expo gives everyone a chance to show how this can be accomplished by involving the entire school.

One team last year chose as its theme, "Tying It Together With Toys." In English the students wrote poetry on toys and themes about, and from the point of view of, a favorite toy. They also completed research on folk toys. In reading class, students studied the characteristics of children's literature and wrote, illustrated, and bound children's books.

In social studies the adventures of Cuddle Bear, who was found to have defective eyes, were followed. Since it was threatened that he'd be recalled, Cuddle Bear decided to travel to Washington looking for the Supreme Court Building so he could state his side of the case. As he "went" from building to building, students learned through writing reports and constructing models about the various federal buildings.

In science and math class the physics of toys with an emphasis on movement and motion were studied. A race track was designed for the cars that had been built in the related arts wood shop class. As they raced their cars, students had to convert the feet covered per second and plot the results on a graph. They also used a sliding board and converted the ratio of time to slide down and the weight of students on a graph. From drama class came the poem, "Happy Hikers," the words of which were studied in English class for parts of speech, kinds of sentences, and punctuation. In music, students built a jug band from bottles; in French they learned "The Three Little Kittens." The LD classes played with toys designed to help them improve their perceptual skills in math, reading, science, social studies, and English. On the night of Expo, all of this was very impressively displayed under an "Objective Train" with over 100 objectives that had been incorporated into the study of toys.

At the end of the school year two *Awards Programs* are held. One is organized by grade level and the other is school wide. Many students become recipients of certificates, trophies and other award symbols. The faculty and administrative team at Hines feel it is imperative that many students receive recognition for their efforts made during the year in the areas of academic, social, and personal growth. For many of these events the parents are invited, and sometimes, but not always, know in advance the award to be made to their child, enabling them to experience that moment of glory at the same time as their child.

Results of the Program

What have been the effects of this all-out effort to get parents into the school? It's not uncommon for the principal to get calls and letters from parents who are so pleased with the effort that teachers have taken to make the program special for their children. After the Award Program last year, at which a Special Education student had received a certificate of merit, the parents called the principal to tell him that in the eight years she had been in school, nothing had ever happened like this before. They were proudly planning to frame the certificate for friends to see as they visited their home.

Students display their pride and happiness at the school by the unusually neat building that they maintain. Numerous team banners ("You are now entering Seventh Heaven"), examples of student work displayed in the halls, and many posters remain in perfect shape for weeks, undamaged by graffiti. Bus drivers constantly remark about how much students love attending Hines as evidenced by the comments made on the twice daily trips to and from school.

Not surprising is the fact that discipline problems have drastically diminished not only in number but also in seriousness. Last year, of the 1065 students enrolled, there were less than a hundred suspensions, a dramatic decrease over previous years.

Perhaps because less of the administrative staff's time must be devoted to solving communications problems between parents and the school, there is more time

for providing what middle school is all about—a place in which students can learn and grow into all that they are capable of becoming.

This section was written by Pamela Evans, Newport News Schools and Tom Gatewood, Northern Virginia Graduate Center of VPI. For further information contact Bob James, Principal, 6160 Jefferson Avenue, Newport News, VA 23605.

E.
PARENTS AND "IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION," A WINNING COMBINATION
Burley Middle School
Charlottesville, Virginia

Discipline problems at Burley Middle School have declined appreciably since the institution of an innovative program in 1981. The program focuses on categorizing misbehaviors at the school into three types, developing clearly defined consequences for each type, and consistently following through with those consequences. The program centers upon an "In-School Suspension" system, which provides for a full-time "ISS" teacher, and a high degree of parent involvement. Students in the Burley program receive a student handbook that clearly delineates the rules for school behavior, along with the consequences of breaking those rules. During the first week of school, students are given a written test over those rules, and the results are sent home for parent signature. As offenses occur, parents are involved in the disciplinary process at an early stage. Time spent in the "ISS" room is structured and supervised closely by the "ISS" teacher, who coordinates the program, maintaining accurate records of each student's disciplinary history and keeping close contact with parents of offenders. Through the well defined structure of the Burley program, parents become full partners in maintaining an atmosphere for learning in the middle school.

The following pages, taken from the student handbook, detail the regulations, policies, offenses and consequences associated with the ISS Program at Burley Middle School. It is worth noting that the strength of this and similar programs lies in the thoroughness that goes into defining offenses and appropriate consequences, and the firmness and commitment with which the program is administered. Burley's listing of offenses and consequences, as well as their policies for implementing the program, seem complete and appropriate. The school's commitment to the program is reflected in the dedication of resources, including a full-time ISS teacher, in support of the program.

This section prepared by Mr. Joseph Pesti, ISS Teacher, Burley Middle School, 901 Rose Hill Drive, Charlottesville, Virginia 22901.

STUDENT BEHAVIOR
School Rules and Regulations

Students are expected to conduct themselves in an orderly, courteous, dignified and respectful manner at all times. The vast majority of the time, Burley students meet these expectations. However, in the event a student acts inappropriately, there will be consequences in order to make it clear that this behavior is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

In order to be more consistent in dealing with student conduct, there will be a set of rules for handling student misbehavior. This set of rules was established to make it clear to all students what behavior is considered inappropriate at Burley and what consequences will follow for each specific action.

The consequences for misbehaving were designed for three different categories of offenses. Type I offenses are minor offenses but are nevertheless considered unacceptable. Type II offenses are considered major offenses. Type III offenses are illegal acts or very serious actions that require immediate disciplining.

After the listing of the type sof behaviors and their consequences, there will be a further explanation of the rules to help clarify any misunderstanding.

Students are to read these rules and learn them so you will know what to expect in the event you behave inappropriately. Notice in reading the rules that parents or guardians will be informed of student misbehavior sooner and more frequently than in past years.

The following lists of offenses includes most, but not all possible, inappropriate behaviors. The principal reserves the right to act as he sees fit on any misconduct not covered in these pages. In certain rare cases, the principal may feel the need to deviate from the set of rules presented here. Although he will try to avoid doing this, he reserves the right to do so.

Type I Offenses:

1. Disturbing class
   a. Talking excessively
   b. Throwing papers in class
   c. Any similar disturbance of class
2. Cursing
3. Tardy to class (without a pass)

Consequences:

1st time in 9 weeks in the same teacher's class: To ISS
2nd time: To ISS, teacher contacts parent

3rd time: To the office, one full day in ISS, parent contact
4th time: To office, 3-day suspension, parent conference

Tardy Consequences
1st time in 9 weeks in the same teacher's class: Warning by the teacher
2nd time: To ISS, parent contact
3rd time: To ofice, one full day in ISS, parent contact
4th time: To office, 3-day suspension, parent conference

Further Explanation:

1. **Tardy to class** offenses will have slightly different consequences than other Type I offenses. Each teacher will enforce this rule in the same way.
2. **Disturbing class** offenses are offenses that the teacher considers as disturbing the conducting of his/her class. Therefore, the student must learn the standards of each teacher that they have and adhere to that teacher's standards. Talking excessively and throwing papers are only examples.
3. **Cursing** is not acceptable at Burley. Students are not to use profanity at any time.
4. For each nine week period, students get a fresh start in each teacher's class. For example, if you disturb Ms. Jones class once in the first 9-week period you will be sent to the In-School Suspension room. If you disturb her class again in the second nine-week marking period, you will go to ISS again but Ms. Jones will not contact your parents. It is when you disturb her class twice in the same 9-week period that she will move to the second step (ISS and a phone call to the parents).
5. A 3-day suspension refers to an out-of-school suspension.

Type II Offenses:

1. Smoking or other tobacco use
2. Cutting class
3. Leaving class without permission
4. Leaving school grounds without permission
5. Disobedient to or cursing teachers or other school personnel
6. Intentionally damaging school property
7. Physical threats to students, teachers, or school personnel
8. Stealing
9. Gambling
10. Forgery
11. Possession of weapons
12. Excessive public display of affection
13. Fighting
14. Cheating

Consequences:

1st time during the school year: To office, one full day in ISS, parent contact.

2nd time for same offense: To office, three-day suspension, parent conference.

For three different Type II offenses, a student will be suspended for three days.

Fighting is a 3-day suspension on the first offense.

Cheating on academic work including copying assignments will result in a failing grade and a parent contact by the teacher.

Further Explanation:

1. You are expected to speak respectfully to and obey a direct request from teachers and all other school employees at all times. School employees include secretaries, aides, custodians, and cafeteria workers.
2. **Intentional damage of school property** will require you to pay for the damage done in addition to any disciplinary action.
3. **Possession of weapons** on school property is not allowed. Knives, chains and any other similar objects are considered weapons.
4. It is not appropriate for you to publicly display your affection for each other.
5. If you commit the same Type II offense twice, you will be suspended for three days.
6. If you commit two **different** Type II offenses, you can remain at the first step of consequences and will be sent to ISS for each offense.
7. When leaving class during class time, a student must get a pass from the teacher to show that you have permission to be out of class.
8. When leaving school early, bring a note signed by your parent or guardian and bring it to the office to be signed by the principal. As you leave, come to the office and sign out.

In-School Suspension (ISS) room trips will be recorded and monitored:

After 3 trips within one 9-week period:

The student's parents will be notified by a letter sent from the school office.

After 5 trips within one 9-week period:

Parents are contacted by the office and the student will spend one full day in ISS. The student's team teachers will also meet with the student to discuss his behavior.

After 7 trips within one 9-week period:

The student will be suspended from school for 1 day and a letter will be sent home from the Superintendent.

After 10 trips within one 9-week period:

The student will be suspended from school for 3 days and a letter will be sent home from the Superintendent.

In-School Suspension Room Rules of Behavior

1. No talking.
2. No gum chewing.
3. Sit. Do not leave your seat without permission.
4. Students must have work to do. If a student finishes his work, he will be assigned work by the ISS teacher.
5. Students will only be allowed to go to the bathroom with permission from the ISS teacher.
6. Students in ISS for one full day should bring work for the whole day and not ask to leave during the day.
7. All full day ISS students will eat their lunch in ISS.
8. Students who violate these rules will be suspended for 1-3 days out of school.

RULES OF BEHAVIOR IN CAFETERIA

1. No running.
2. No cutting ahead in the lunch line.
3. No yelling or loud talking.
4. Students must eat neatly and leave their table clean. If a teacher asks students to clean their places, it is to be done without argument.
5. Visiting other tables is permitted.
6. Students are not to leave the cafeteria during lunch period without permission from the teacher on duty.

Consequences:

If a student breaks these rules:

1. You may have to sit on the cafeteria stage, or
2. You may lose the privilege to eat in the cafeteria and will eat lunch in the ISS room for 1-3 days.

F.

PARENTS FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

Weisenborn Junior High School
Huber Heights, Ohio

"Parents are their children's most important teachers." This is the theme behind the parent involvement program at Weisenborn Junior High School in Huber Heights, Ohio. United States Secretary of Education, T. H. Bell had this to say about the Weisenborn parent involvement program. "The foundation for American education is the family. Your parental participation program, Parents for Excellence in Education, demonstrates the type of active parental support students need to encourage increased student achievement."

Presently two Parents for Excellence in Education programs are being implemented at Weisenborn Junior High School. These programs are designed to encourage parents to play an active role in their child's learning and not just be volunteers and school fund raisers.

School Visitation Program

The school visitation program provides parents and guardians with the opportunity to spend an actual day of school with their child. Only six to eight parents are encouarged to visit the school each day.

This type of visit is very different from the typical open house visitation most parents experience. Usually a typical open house schedule has parents spend about ten minutes in each of their children's classes.

During these ten minute segments the teacher usually tells the parents about the curriculum and daily procedures. The bell rings and the parents move to their child's next class and listen to the next teacher say about the same things. The classrooms usually have the "A" papers displayed around the room and the textbooks and supplementary materials artistically arranged for parent viewing. This type of school visitation experience is very nice and safe, but not at all a realistic representation of what a normal day of school is like for their child. The Weisenborn school visitation program enables parents to experience as closely as possible a real day at school. Parents see and hear the actual teacher's instruction. They move through the crowded halls with their child to the next class. Cafeteria food and lunch time socialization are also experienced by the parent. Parents see all the good, bad, and indifferent happenings of a school day.

Several important factors can occur from a parent visiting a day of school with their child. When a parent takes a day off work or a day of vacation to experience a day of school with their child it overtly demonstrates to that child the parent's interest in their education. Parents will gain a much truer perception of what their son or daughter experiences at school each day. This true perception of the school environment will enhance the possibility for more meaningful parent/child discussions about school and learning. Most parents also gain a sincere appreciation

for the efforts and skills of the teachers of early adolescents. When we literally open our doors and classrooms to our parents and community we are taking a risk and a giant step forward. We are taking a risk by letting parents see our schools as they are and not just as how they are portrayed at open houses. We are taking a giant step forward by increasing the chance for more meaningful parent involvement with their child's education. Weisenborn felt the risk was worth it.

To parents who say they do not need to visit school for a day, ask them, "Where else would you send your child for 180 days for 7 hours a day and have never been there yourself?"

Workshop On How Parents Can Improve Their Child's Study Skills and Habits

The purpose of the workshop is to foster meaningful parent/child involvement by providing educational experiences for parents and guardians on how they can help improve their child's study skills and study habits. This workshop is designed to demonstrate that parents are their children's most important teachers and that they can effectively improve their child's achievement. Parents are also informed that they, not the teachers, are responsible for seeing that their children do their homework, and have the necessary learning supplies and equipment. The workshop provides the parents with information and procedures to help them accept and effectively meet these responsibilities.

The workshop format and materials for the parent workshop were developed by the teachers and the principal at Weisenborn Junior High. Items covered in the one hour workshop are as follows:

I. Goals of the Workshop.
II. Parent Questionnaire on Study Skills and Study Habits.
III. Characteristics of Students Who Have Good and Poor Study Skills and Habits.
IV. Examples of a Homework Assignment and How Parents Can Effectively Monitor Their Child's Homework.
V. Examples of How to Set-up an After-School Schedule for Your Child.
VI. Setting the Action Plan for Improving Your Child's Study Skills and Study Habits.
VII. Parent Evaluation of the Worskhop.

Over 200 parents have attended the Weisenborn Study Skills Workshop. Each parent evaluated the workshop as being beneficial and recommended every parent should attend the workshop.

This section prepared by Dr. Ronald Sinclair, Principal, Weisenborn Junior High School, 6061 Old Troy Pike, Huber Heights, Ohio 45424.

5

Where Can I Learn More?

For additional information on involving parents in middle school programs, consult the following resources:

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The following organizations can also assist in the development of Parent Involvement Programs:

National School Volunteer Program
300 North Washington Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

National Community Education Association
1017 Avon Street
Flint, MI 48502

Center for the Study of Parent Involvement
5020 Boyd Street
Oakland, CA 94618

National Parent-Teacher Association
700 North Rush Street
Chicago, IL 60611

National Association of Secondary School Principals
1904 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091

Appendix

The two resources in the Appendix should prove to be useful tools for involving parents in middle school programs. The first, "A Baker's Dozen: Tips for Parents," is designed to assist parents in working with their middle grades students at home. It could be duplicated and handed out at a PTA meeting, mailed home by the school as part of the school newsletter, or it might serve as a handout upon which to base a parent-teacher discussion.

The flyer is designed to assist the school in attracting parents into various volunteer roles. It is aimed at catching parental attention and convincing them that the school needs their time and services. The flyer has a place to add the school name and logo, and another spot to include the school name, the principal's name, and the school telephone number. The flyer is easily reproducible, and could be distributed in the same manner as the "Tips for Parents" handout.

A Baker's Dozen: Tips for Parents

Parents can do a great deal at home to enhance the learning of their children. A good recipe for effective education calls for ingredients from both home and school. If you want to enhance *your* child's learning, apply some of the following tips:

1. PROMOTE GOOD STUDY HABITS: As a minimum, provide your child with a suitable location — quiet, and free from distractions. Make sure there is adequate light, that the study table or desk is equipped with all required study tools, and that the site is comfortable. Effective study sessions are most likely to occur in a setting well removed from the visual distractions of television and passing family members. The student should not be jumping up every five minutes to get a dictionary, pencil or paper. A bed or lounging chair is too comfortable for effective study; a table or desk with chair in the child's room is recommended. If your child recognizes via your words and actions that good study habits are important, then he or she is more likely to develop them. Do not hesitate to talk with your child about study habits.

2. TAKE AN ACTIVE INTEREST IN YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL WORK AND EXPERIENCE: When your child comes home from school, ask about the day's activities. Because you show an interest in his or her school day and school work, your student will learn that these things are important. Don't be satisfied with one word answers to your questions; sit down with your child for a few minutes, or over dinner, to talk about school. If all you seem to show an interest in are grades, then your child will come to believe that grades are more important than learning.

3. BE A READING MODEL: Encourage your child to read for pleasure, and show an interest in what he or she reads. Let your child see *you* read; for our actions speak louder than our words. Too often, parents tell children that reading is important, but the kids never see Mom or Dad "crack" a book. Is it any wonder we are a television society? *Show* your child that reading is important, and enjoyable.

4. ENCOURAGE WRITING: Encourage your child to write letters to friends and relatives, to write away for free offers, to write poetry or stories. Encourage writing in all of its forms; children need to see that writing, like reading, is part of life. Let your child know how important writing is in your work and in your social life.

5. ENCOURAGE FAMILY LEARNING GAMES: Playing family games like Scrabble and Boggle tends to enlarge student vocabularies and improve spelling skills — moreso than a game of Monopoly or Uno. Scaled down versions of Trivial Pursuit are also good for boosting general knowledge. Such games may also provide some fine family experiences.

6. KEEP INFORMED ABOUT WHAT'S HAPPENING IN YOUR SCHOOL: Don't hesitate to communicate with your child's teacher, and encourage teachers to do the same. Don't be satisfied with an occasional memo from the school; take an active role to stay informed. If the school does not have a newsletter to parents, or the teacher does not send home memos to keep you abreast of activities, suggest that they do so. Become an active supporter of the Parent-Teacher organization; your active involvement will tell your child, once again, that school is important.

7. TEACH YOUR CHILD ADULT TASKS: Take time to prepare your child for managing a budget, writing a check, buying groceries, and the myriad other tasks that adults do routinely. Help your child learn to manage money; provide opportunities for your child to learn about these adult activities at home, to prepare them for adult independence. Teach self-responsibility.

8. USE POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT: Think positive; when you critique your child's homework, comment on strengths — not just weaknesses. Use praise liberally; avoid negative criticism. A child's spirit is fragile, and easily bruised; handle with care.

9. TEACH YOUR CHILD TO RESPECT OTHERS: Teach your child to respect the rights of others. Often, a child learns to respect the rights of others because his or her own rights are respected. Remember that your children are individuals, persons in their own rights. Treat them accordingly.

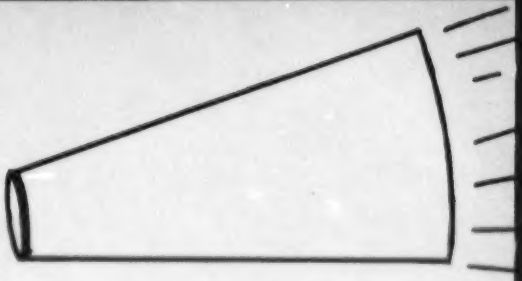
10. LISTEN TO YOUR CHILD. When your child talks to you, take time to really listen. Stop reading the newspaper and nodding "uh-huh." Learn to pay genuine attention. Adults expect children to listen intently to everything they say; children usually deserve the same courtesy. For real communication to occur, both parties must be effective listeners.

11. ENCOURAGE FAMILY DISCUSSION: Talk *with* your children, not just to them. Encourage family discussion of school and other topics at the dinner table. Avoid the tendency to gather silently before the television; conversation is a learned art.

12. HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN: Talk with your child's teacher about activities that you can use at home to encourage learning, or to help tutor your child in his school subjects. Parents are teachers too, and school teachers need your help.

13. VOLUNTEER: You have many gifts that your child and other children can benefit from. Your school needs you.

CALLING ALL PARENTS!



GET INVOLVED

WHY SHOULD I BECOME INVOLVED?

The following benefits occur when parents are actively involved in the middle school program:

—your child's academic performance is likely to improve.
—your child develops new interest in his or her education, because of your interest and willingness to be involved.
—your child's academic gains will tend to last longer.
—your child's behavior, at school and at home, may improve.
—you will know what is happening in your child's school and classroom.
—you will be better equipped to understand your child and his or her age group.
—you will enjoy serving in a worthwhile role in the school.
—you have skills and can be of real help to your child's teachers.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Parent volunteers can do virtually anything that needs doing. You might serve in a tutorial role, helping individual children, or as a classroom aide. You might serve as a member of an Advisory Council, or assist in some other role, based on your skills and interests. The most valuable thing you can offer the school, and therefore your child, is your time.

Across the country, parents are serving in roles like these:

—classroom aides, assisting teachers in various ways.
—tutors, working with individual children who need help in the basics.
—clerical aides, assisting with typing, filing, and other clerical and administrative duties in the office, library, or classroom.
—guest instructor, bringing special knowledge and experience into the classroom to augment the regular classroom instruction.
—coaching intramural programs, or assisting with other school programs.

WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT?

The principal at your child's school is waiting to hear from you! Decide today to seek an active role in the education of your son or daughter. Take time to find out how YOU can become involved. If not for yourself, then do it for your child.

PRINCIPAL: _____

SCHOOL: _____

_____

TELEPHONE: _____

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SCHOOL LOGO
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